# ANCIENT REMEDIES FOR A MODERN YOU:
## AN INTRODUCTION TO AYURVEDA

# Table of Contents


3 Chapter 1: What is Ayurveda?

6 Chapter 2: Prakriti—Your Constitution

8 Chapter 3: Vikiriti—Your Imbalances

9 Chapter 4: How Lifestyle Influences Dosha Balance

10 Chapter 5: The Secret to Great Health—Managing Doshas to Maintain Balance

16 Glossary


Ancient yet timeless, Ayurveda gives us the means of attaining and maintaining our own optimal health and well-being. Its benefits have been proven over centuries of use, and its methodologies are as applicable today in the West as they were thousands of years ago in India.

Ayurveda recognizes that each person is unique and offers a customized approach to wellness. This booklet outlines the basics of Ayurveda, and explains how you can begin to use this science of health for yourself.

# Chapter 1: What is Ayurveda?

Ayurveda is considered one of the world's oldest healing sciences, originating in India at least 5,000 years ago. Its name is a Sanskrit word that literally translates as "the wisdom of life" or "the knowledge of longevity" (it is a compound of ãyus, meaning life or longevity, and veda, meaning deep knowledge or wisdom). In accordance with this definition, Ayurveda views health as much more than the absence of disease.

Health, from an Ayurvedic perspective, is defined as a gracious, tranquil, content, joyous, bright, and clear state of the body, senses, mind, and spirit, including the balanced state of one's natural constitution, all bodily tissues, the digestive capacities, and waste excretion. What a mouthful! Simply put, health is achieved when you are aligned with your own natural and unique state of balance.

## How is Your Health Unique?

The key to Ayurvedic wellness and healing is the knowledge that health is not a "one size fits all" proposition. One must understand the unique nature of each person and situation, taking into account the individual, the season, the geography, and so on.

Each person has a constitution that is specific to him or her, and movement away from that constitution creates health imbalances; if such imbalances are not addressed, disease may develop. So, the early signs of imbalance serve as a wakeup call to make gentle and natural shifts in behavior to return to balance—such as adjusting diet, modifying daily activities, and taking herbal remedies for a time.

To understand how imbalances occur, and what to do about them, we can look to the following fundamental concepts of Ayurveda.

## The Five Elements That Transform Our Understanding of Health

Ayurveda arises from a tradition that describes the entire physical world—including man—in terms of five elements: space, air, fire, water, and earth. These five elements can most accurately be thought of as energetic patterns rather than as purely physical substances, and each has particular qualities. To help make sense of this, consider how these elements manifest in the natural world:

- ***Earth*** is cold, heavy, solid, stable, and dry. This element is exemplified by dirt.
- ***Water*** is cold, mobile, heavy, soft, and liquid. Think of the ocean.
- ***Fire*** is hot, subtle, mobile, dry, and sharp. Its clearest manifestation in nature is the sun, which provides warmth to the earth and sky.
- ***Space***, as in the sky, is vast, cold, light, and clear. It enables all other things to have a place to take form and exist.
- ***Air*** is dry, cold, rough, and full of motion. To understand these qualities, think of what it's like to be whipped by an aggressive wind.

These five elements clearly manifest individually in the natural world. But even more profoundly, they all exist at all times in all things—including in the body—and each has its particular role to play.

# Chapter 1: What is Ayurveda? (cont'd)

For example, let's look at the body's digestive system:

- ***Earth*** rules the actual structure and solidity of the digestive tract.
- ***Water*** rules the liquid, fluid quality of the digestive juices and acids.
- ***Fire*** rules the heat and digestive enzymes involved in the metabolic process.
- ***Space*** pervades the whole process, including the space within each cell.
- ***Air*** rules the peristaltic movement of the nutrients through the digestive tract.

In fact, each and every cell of the body is made up of all five elements.

## The Three Doshas That Will Change the Way You See Yourself

The five elements combine in various ways to form three constitutional principles, known in Ayurveda as doshas. These are:

- ***Vata***, comprised of air and space.
- ***Pitta***, comprised of fire and water.
- ***Kapha***, comprised of earth and water.

To understand these principles at their core, it is useful to think of the different qualities of the elements that create them.

### Vata

Composed of air and space, vata is dry, light, cold, rough, subtle/pervasive, mobile, and clear. As such, vata regulates the principle of movement. Any bodily motion—chewing, swallowing, nerve impulses, breathing, muscle movements, thinking, peristalsis, bowel movements, urination, menstruation—requires balanced vata. When vata is out of balance, any number of these movements may be deleteriously affected.

### Pitta

Pitta brings forth the qualities of fire and water. It is sharp, penetrating, hot, light, liquid, mobile, and oily. Pitta's domain is the principal of transformation. Just as fire transforms anything it touches, pitta is in play any time the body converts or processes something. So pitta oversees digestion, metabolism, temperature maintenance, sensory perception, and comprehension. Imbalanced pitta can lead to sharpness and inflammation in these areas in particular.

### Kapha

Kapha, composed of earth and water, is heavy, cold, dull, oily, smooth, dense, soft, static, liquid, cloudy, hard, and gross (in the sense of dense or thick). As kapha governs stability and structure, it forms the substance of the human body, from the skeleton to various organs to the fatty molecules (lipids) that support the body. An excess of kapha leads to an overabundance of density, heaviness, and excess in the body.

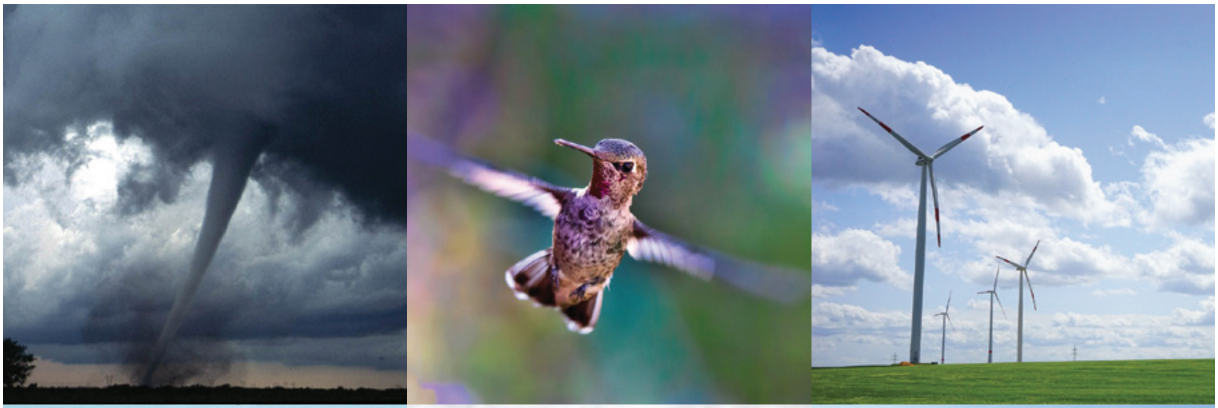
Once you put on the lenses of Ayurveda and see things in terms of vata, pitta, kapha, and combinations thereof, the whole world comes alive in a new way. Look at the world around you! The doshas take form in endlessly interesting ways (see Table 1 for examples).

## Table 1

Examples of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha

- ***Vata***: A tornado, a hummingbird, and wind energy
- ***Pitta***: A volcanic eruption, a tiger, and solar power
- ***Kapha***: An earthquake, an elephant, and geothermal power

VATA



PITTA

KAPHA

# Chapter 2: Prakriti—Your Constitution

## The Big Question: What's Your Dosha?

The three doshas, representing the five elements, are present in everyone to some degree. They are all a necessary and integral part of the body. But each of us is born with our own unique dosha balance, known as our prakriti. We are truly individuals—even twins are born with differences.

Some people are dominant in one principle—either vata, pitta, or kapha. While others have two doshas that come to the fore, though one of the two is often primary (even more present). Still others possess a fairly equal balance of each vata, pitta, and kapha (this is called tri-doshic), though this is rare.

So what's your prakriti? Knowing this gives you the key to using Ayurveda effectively for yourself.

Determining your prakriti—your fundamental dosha balance—requires an assessment of your most natural state. Consider your physical structure as well as mental and emotional tendencies. Remember to think of what is most natural to you, rather than what you're like when you are stressed or ill.

## Vata Characteristics

A vata predominant person usually displays the following traits.

- **Physique:** A light, trim build, often delicate in nature. The features (facial features, limbs, fingers, etc.) are long, slim, or narrow, and the hair is thin, wiry, or curly.
- **Digestion:** The appetite and digestion are often variable, going up and down, yet often lean towards "eating like a bird" and constipation.
- **Personality:** A vata person tends to be creative, be able to "go with the flow" and think abstractly, and often has rapid speech with a thin, raspy, high-pitched, or crackly voice. Vata predominant people are also prone to fear and anxiety, and have trouble focusing on one thing at a time.

## Pitta Characteristics

A pitta predominant person displays the following traits.

- **Physique:** A medium build, with average height and weight. The physical features can be sharp and fiery (red hair, for example), precise and well-defined.
- **Digestion:** A pitta predominant person usually has a ferocious appetite, strong metabolism, and may "roar" when hungry.
- **Personality:** A pitta nature makes one passionate, an initiator, directed, and focused. A sharp, probing intellect and the ability to focus intently can lead such people to doggedly investigate and get to the core of a matter. This same fire can also make a pitta primary person easily irritable, fussy, angry, judgmental, and critical.

## Kapha Characteristics

A kapha predominant person usually displays the following traits.

- **Physique:** A large, stout frame is a general kapha characeristic. The features are rounder, larger, thicker, and often smoother than those with vata or pitta predominance.
- **Digestion:** The appetite is consistent and regulated. The metabolism tends to be slow,

and kapha dominant people may accumulate weight more readily and have more difficulty losing it. As the digestion can be sluggish, the person may feel sleepy or tired after eating.

- **Personality:** A kapha person may be described as "down to earth" or "solid as a rock" (notice the reference to earthy qualities); there is a tendency toward being grounded, stable, patient, compassionate, and nurturing. Once a kapha grabs ahold of something, he or she holds on tight—this frequently means a person with a good memory and/or firm beliefs. These same qualities also make kapha folk prone to inflexibility, possessiveness, hesitancy toward change, jealousy, and inertia.

## What is Your Constitution?

What are your qualities, tendencies, and proclivities—physically, mentally, and emotionally? Do you have a predominance of one of these doshas? Or do you find that the qualities of one come forth strongly while you also display a number of characteristics related to another dosha? What is your Ayurvedic blueprint?

You can take a quiz to help determine your prakriti, and see more examples of features associated with vata, pitta, and kapha, on the Ayurveda Yoga website.

After taking this quiz, you may also choose to receive general daily guidelines to help maintain your ideal dosha balance.

# Chapter 3: Vikriti—Your Imbalances

## Why Knowing Your Vikriti is Essential to Optimum Health

In Ayurveda, all ill health is viewed, fundamentally, as a dosha imbalance (called vikriti). Dosha imbalances can manifest in various stages, from a general feeling of "something is not right" all the way to diagnosed illnesses with serious complications. To address this, Ayurveda presents a vast toolbox of treatment modalities to choose from; but whatever the treatment, the goal is to reestablish the person's natural balance of vata, pitta, and kapha.

To achieve this balance, Ayurveda focuses on two key principles:

1. Remove the **inciting cause.**
2. Treat the lingering imbalance with the **opposite.**

An Ayurvedic practitioner works with these two principles, providing an in-depth analysis and skillfully drawing from the toolbox to create a customized wellness plan. While it is best to work with a practitioner, you can begin your Ayurvedic journey even before a consultation, and the self-awareness that you gain through careful observation will serve you for your lifetime.

You can start by taking the Ayurveda Yoga vikriti quiz to determine your imbalances.

The more you observe the subtle qualities in your body, the more flexibility you'll have in your day-to-day choices. Every living being is dynamic. We continually change and renew every day. In fact, this is the very thing that empowers us to achieve better health! It is the body's capacity to regenerate itself by creating new cells that allows healing to happen. So if you can feel what is going on with your body today, you can make diet, lifestyle, and supplement choices to encourage your own optimal balance. Today, are you internally hot or cold? Heavy and dull, or light and airy? Dry and rough, or well lubricated?

Once you get an internal gauge, then just remember one thing: balance any dosha imbalances with the opposite qualities. While this may seem like a foreign or daunting task, it becomes easier as you learn and remember the qualities of each dosha and apply its opposite. For example, when vata is aggravated or imbalanced, it may manifiest as excess coldness, dryness, or roughness. This can mean mild constipation (cold, dry, rough stool) or difficulty with joints (dry, rough cartilage in the joint spaces and reduced synovial fluid). In this situation, Ayurveda recommends applying the opposite qualities of warmth, oilyness lubrication, and smoothness to regain balance.

See Table 2 for examples of how to apply these qualities, using vata as an example.

### Table 2

Balancing Vata: Warm, Oily / Lubricating, and Smooth Treatments

| | |
|---|---|
| Diet | Warm, cooked foods with small amounts of ghee (clarified butter). Avoid dry, raw, cold, and/or rough foods. |
| Massage Therapy | Topical application of sesame oil or herbal massage oil (oil infused with vata-pacifying herbs, such as Ayurveda Yoga Vata Massage Oil or Mahanarayan Oil). |
| Yoga | Vata-pacifying poses that are grounding and restorative. Emphasize slow, smooth, and steady during your practice. |
| Herbs | Consider warming, nourishing, strengthening, and cleansing herbs. For example: ashwagandha; shatavari; dashamula; ginger; and triphala (amalaki, haritaki, and bibhitaki). |

# Chapter 4: How Lifestyle Influences Dosha Balance

Given that we don't live in a protective bubble, we must face numerous challenges to our health on a daily basis. Some stem from choices that we make—our diet, lifestyle, lack of exercise, unprocessed emotions, and undue stress. Others from exposures that are out of our control—water and air pollution, harmful chemicals in our food supply, excessive noise in our communities, etc. As we interact with our world, both the world external to us and the world within our minds, the doshas tend to get jostled out of balance.

**"Like Increases Like"** is an invaluable Ayurvedic principle to keep in mind, here. If you are experiencing an excess of a particular quality and associated discomfort, exposure to more of that quality will only aggravate the problem. For instance, if you are a kapha predominant person with a heavy, solid constitution, then eating heavy, fatty foods, which are kapha in nature, will surely aggravate a weight problem. Similarly, for a pitta predominant person, an excess of spicy foods, which are naturally heating and inflaming, can aggravate acid indigestion, which is also hot, burning, and fiery by nature. While frequent travel on airplanes, which involves vata (light, airy, drying, cold, rough), can worsen vata imbalances, such as constipation and sleeping difficulties (good sleep is grounded and heavy, the opposite of vata). Air travel can also challenge the nervous system, which functions on the principle of movement (as nerve impulses) and so is vata in nature; perhaps you've noticed certain associated symptoms after a long flight, such as discomfort from pinched nerves, sciatica, and so on. Understanding this principle of like increasing like gives us a powerful tool for wellness.

Digestive fire, ***agni***, is also important to address for optimal balance. Our body uses agni to process anything that comes into it. When the agni (digestive fire) is strong, it is able to take whatever comes in, extract the nourishing portion, and eliminate the rest as waste. But if our agni is weak, or the insults on our body are just overwhelming, we aren't able to process everything that enters, and this leads to a build-up of toxins, which Ayurveda calls ***ama***. This build-up of ama can inhibit the proper functioning of any bodily system and lead to dosha imbalance.

Of note, digestion refers to more than our body's processing of the food and drink we ingest. The mouth is only one entry point into the body. We must also digest the experiences that come in through our eyes, ears, nose, and skin. Included with these experiences are the emotions they create, which the agni must digest as well. As most of us have experienced, all emotions have a lingering presence, whether anger, fear, joy, or grief. Hearing cruel, angry words said in the "heat of an argument" can produce, for example, acid indigestion that is similar to that which occurs after eating an excessively spicy meal. Undigested experiences and emotions can lead to ama and physical symptoms just as readily as can an undigested meal.

Finally, we must look at the choices we make. Ayurveda considers the source of many imbalances to be our own **"crimes against wisdom"**.[1] Our innate wisdom of what is appropriate for us and what is not tells us what choices to make; but we often choose to override this inner voice in preference of a strong desire or craving. These choices can pile up, especially when there is already a weak agni or backed up ama. While there is nothing wrong with having fun or indulging in life's pleasures, one must know one's limitations. Our own choices are often at the core of dosha imbalance.

[1] As translated by Dr. Vasant Lad

# Chapter 5: The Secret to Great Health—Doshas to Maintain Balance

Once you know your prakriti (unique dosha balance), you can act to promote your well-being. The key is to keep your vata, pitta, and kapha balanced. This is something that you can attend to regularly—daily, in fact.

The ideal time to start paying attention to the doshas is before they become imbalanced—this is the Ayurvedic method of true preventative health. In this context, your daily routine is your most powerful ally. The body, being subject to the laws of nature, ages. But aging does not need to mean being burdened with ill health. What can you do to age gracefully, starting at any age?

## Start with the Following Six Strategies to Keep Your Doshas Balanced:

### 1. Keep Your Digestive Fire Strong

Agni, or digestive fire, is responsible for nourishing the tissues and removing wastes, and so it must be protected and promoted. How do you know if your agni is strong? Your appetite, digestion, and ama (toxin) buildup are good indicators.

**Appetite**
A different kind of appetite is associated with each dosha. Vata dosha, whose agni is often flickering and on the cusp of being snuffed out, may have a variable appetite, being hungry at times, and having no appetite at others. Pitta, on the other hand, has a fiery hunger that arises quickly and with intensity, and demands to be satisfied. Kapha's appetite is sure and steady, following a faithful pattern.

The common thread that reveals healthy agni is hunger. If you aren't getting hungry, and find yourself just eating because it's time to eat, then your agni is struggling, likely either from the delicacy of vata or the heavy dullness of excess kapha.

**Digestion**
Food is supposed to nourish our tissues and give us energy. Ask yourself how you feel after a meal. If the agni is strong and the doshas are balanced, you will feel energized and satisfied after a meal. If imbalanced vata is affecting your agni, you may have bloating, burping, and flatulence as your embarrassing post-meal acquaintances. If pitta is excessively stoking your agni, acid indigestion and burning may torment your peace. And if imbalanced kapha has gotten a hold of your agni, you may be too sleepy after a meal to know what hit you, or you may notice a phlegm or mucus buildup.

**Ama (Toxin) Buildup**
When the agni is not healthy, the things that enter the body are not properly processed and ama builds up, creating an obstruction to natural flow. If you look anywhere in the natural world, stagnation leads to poor health. Consider a body of water. What happens when the water can't move? Algae and other growth builds up, eventually choking out the water's entire living ecosystem. Similarly, says Ayurveda, life energy must be able to flow freely through the body's tissues for a healthy state to exist.

A number of signs can clue you into ama buildup. The first is a heavy white coating on your tongue. Make a habit of checking your tongue every morning, and you'll see that the coating changes, especially as you make changes in your diet and lifestyle. The second sign of ama is odor—body odor, mouth odor, odor with flatulence, etc. And a third sign of ama is a generalized sense of heaviness and dullness—this can be both in the body and the mind.

If ama is creating havoc in your internal ecosystem, you can take charge by supporting a healthy agni.

# Chapter 5: The Secret to Great Health—Doshas to Maintain Balance (cont'd)

## Tips for a Healthy Agni

Improving or kindling your agni can be likened to stoking a small bonfire:

- **Avoid ice and cold drinks. Instead, drink warm water or hot herbal teas.** When eating a meal, take only sips so as to avoid dousing your digestive fire with a large amount of liquid.
- **Cook with warming spices.** Cinnamon, clove, black pepper, and ginger are great examples. For a spicy, agni-inducing appetizer, you can cut ginger into small pieces, add a squeeze of lime and a pinch of salt, and enjoy.
- **Prefer warm, cooked foods over raw, dry, rough foods.** If your food has been cooked by an external fire, your internal fire won't have to work as hard.
- **Take your largest meal at lunchtime.** Your body works in sync with natural rhythms, and therefore, your internal fire is at its peak when the sun (the solar system's fire) is at its peak. Eat lighter meals in the evening, preferably allowing at least 2-3 hours before bed.

- **Give focus to your meal.** Multitasking while eating, though it may seem efficient, distracts your agni, as it must digest what is coming in through all of the senses. Instead, even if you can only spare a short break, focus on your food, chew it thoroughly, and infuse it with the intention to nourish your body.
- **Be more active**—a brisk walk, a vigorous swim in warm water, an enlightening yoga class. All of these will serve to kindle the agni.
- **Ayurvedic herbs and spices to support healthy digestion** can be added to your food or, if your lifestyle demands it, taken as a supplement.
  - Vata digestion: Prefer warming, grounding, digestive herbs, such as ginger, black pepper, cumin, and asafoetida (also called hing). Vata Digest tablets can also be taken to support healthy digestion.
  - Pitta digestion: Pick soothing, cooling herbs and supplements, such as aloe vera, cumin, and fennel. Pitta Digest contains cooling herbs to help strengthen digestion.
  - Kapha digestion: Choose heating, activating herbs such as black pepper, ginger, and pippali, which can also be found in Kapha Digest.

## 2. Be Attentive to Your Diet

"Diet" is such a torturous word for most people. It brings to mind thoughts of depriving oneself of enjoyment and slaving over a stove juggling a thousand nutritional principles regarding what you "should be eating."

With Ayurveda food is to be celebrated. It is the very substance of life. Once digested, it is the essence of our food that nourishes our every cell and allows for the production of new cells. In this way, food is medicine, and can be used to prevent or right dosha imbalance.

Many people relate eating to a list of rules, of do's and don'ts; but you can also approach eating from an intuitive place, where you consider the state of your being and what needs balancing, then choose foods with the opposite qualities to help create the balance. On a cold winter day, for example, when your body has to brave freezing temperatures and gusty winds, treat yourself to warm,

grounding foods. Heavy, grounding foods don't have to be fattening—you can enjoy a hearty soup, warm rice, or a small baked fruit dessert redolent with the aroma of cinnamon. On such a day, a raw salad would be best avoided due to its cold, dry, rough, and light qualities.

Conversely, if you are feeling a lot of internal heat and excess pitta, which may be manifesting as an angry skin rash or hot flashes or a flared temper, soothe yourself with light, sweet, bitter, and cooling foods. Enjoy fresh greens and sweet fruits. Fresh milk—or coconut milk—based foods are also nicely cooling and soothing. Just stay away from fiery, spicy dishes, predominantly sour/acidic foods, or excessively salty foods.

As a general guideline, **fresh and home cooked is best**. Even with a busy schedule, you can find time to nourish yourself in this way. Do a little extra prep when you have the time (chop extra vegetables, for example), and find recipes that come together quickly. Turn on a crock-pot in the morning and come home to a scrumptious home-cooked meal.

Most importantly, remember to give your food some love. The Ayurvedic point of view is that on a subtle level, the intention and emotion that go into making your food impact its ability to nourish your body. Developing a joyous relationship with your food is one of the most healthy things you can do, as opposed to falling into guilt, haste, or indifference.

Eventually, thinking of your food in this way becomes second nature and you can choose your foods wisely without worrying about too many rules. If you take just a few minutes to observe how you feel after every meal, you naturally start recognizing the effects of various food choices on your body. There are also numerous guides and books available that provide Ayurvedic recipes and list foods that are good for vata, pitta, and kapha. These are useful and fun, but remember that they are only guidelines, so don't let them constrict you. We are always changing, and a healthy diet requires variety; nature provides her bounty of nutrients in a diversity of colors and textures.

## 3. Create a Daily Routine

To really reap the benefits of Ayurveda, and prevent the doshas from wreaking havoc, let the principles of Ayurveda become part of your daily lifestyle. Rather than a constrictive set of rules to follow, Ayurveda offers a creative and expansive way of living.

Consider creating simple, enjoyable daily routines for yourself. In a world where you constantly give of yourself to those around you, you must find time and space to give to yourself, to rejuvenate yourself. A daily routine allows you to do just this—keep yourself tuned-up to boldly face the opportunities and challenges of life.

Ayurveda offers practices that address each of the sense organs, to help them function optimally. There are also practices for the nervous system and the mind, so that we may best interact and integrate with our world. Following are a few of these practices that we find particularly helpful.

## Tips for a Healthy Daily Routine

- **Self-massage with warm oil:** A daily self-massage done with warm oil has numerous benefits, from rejuvenating the skin to toning strong muscles, lubricating and supporting healthy joints, fortifying the nervous system, stimulating general circulation, and benefiting healthy sleep patterns. In general, self-massage is a great aid in pacifying excess vata. The

# Chapter 5: The Secret to Great Health—Doshas to Maintain Balance (cont'd)

Sanskrit word for oil, sneha, is also the Sanskrit word for love; as such, this practice offers a subtle way to learn to love and accept yourself, just as you are.

Self-massage can be done in as little as 15 minutes a day. For more detailed information on this restorative practice, please visit the Ayurvedic Oil Massage page on the Ayurveda Yoga website.

- **Healthy bowel habits:** Ayurveda has long recognized the need for an optimal colon. As the body's main means of removing waste, healthy daily bowel movements are essential to preventing the build up of toxic waste substances and to keeping the doshas balanced. Modern medical systems echo the extreme importance of colon health, implicating poor colon function in everything from allergies to cancer.

  A supportive daily routine promoted in Ayurveda is to sit on the commode at the same time every morning for a few minutes, allowing your body to form the habit of regular bowel evacuation. In order to support soft, well-formed stools, Ayurveda also advocates consuming appropriate amounts of water, ghee (clarified butter) and oil, and vegetables and grains with high fiber content. Drinking a glass of warm water first thing in the morning on an empty stomach and gently massaging your abdomen in a clock-wise motion can also help stimulate a bowel movement.

  When needed, occasional supplemention with natural herbal remedies, such as fiber supplements or triphala, can help restore the colon's natural intelligence. Herbs such as triphala serve numerous functions in supporting optimal health, with bowel health being just one aspect.

- **Exercise for body, mind, and spirit:** As with any comprehensive health system, Ayurveda promotes physical activity and exercise. For complete health, Ayurveda proposes that not only the body, but also the mind and spirit, need activity to stay balanced, limber, and strong.

  Today, as in ancient times, these things may be accomplished through yoga. Yoga is not just about twisted body positions, but is instead a philosophy rooted in using the discipline of body and mind to reach one's highest potential, and to learn how to accept "what is." Starting from wherever you are right now, gradually practicing physical flexibility and strength in association with a calm, full breath translates into the flexibility and strength of a calm, aware mind. Can you really get all this from yoga postures? Absolutely—when you study regularly with a teacher who carries this wisdom and is able to coordinate physical movement with proper breathing practices, skillfully fostering the body/mind/spirit connection.

- **General hygiene:** To round out these suggestions, Ayurveda also gives some general recommendations for a supportive daily morning routine, including:
  - Brush teeth and scrape tongue.
  - Rinse mouth with a small amount of Daily Swish Pulling Oil.
  - Apply oil to head, nose, and ears (covered if you do a self-massage).
  - Wash eyes with cool water.
  - Cleanse all external orifices daily.

# Chapter 5: The Secret to Great Health—Doshas to Maintain Balance (cont'd)

## 4. Choose Supplements When Needed

To keep the doshas balanced, nature has provided supportive herbs whose benefits have been relied upon for thousands of years. These benefits have been enumerated in Ayurveda based on the qualities and doshas that each herb addresses, supporting every bodily system and function. Sometimes, the body's natural intelligence and inner workings need a kick-start, or a gentle nudge in the right direction. Herbs can provide just this.

With the benefit of the Internet, you can learn more about which Ayurvedic herbs are traditionally recommended to support which bodily systems and functions. To create a complete plan of action, including herbal supplements, that is just right for you, we recommended that you visit an Ayurvedic practitioner.

As a safety note, to prevent exposure to pesticides and harmful chemicals, we recommend you choose herbs that are certified organic when possible, and are tested for heavy metals and microbes. Know about the quality control standards of the company from whom you purchase your supplements.

You can find a complete selection of Ayurvedic products made from herbs that are certified organic, sustainably sourced, and fairly traded at www.ayurvedayoga.com.au .

## 5. Find Harmony with Natural Rhythms (Climate and Season)

The body's rhythms are inseparably related to the rhythms of nature. Your body is a dynamic, living being, ever changing in relation to your actions, and also in relation to age, time of day, season, and geography. Each of these cycles of nature is associated with certain qualities and doshas.

### Age

- Childhood: Kapha age (Time for growing and building our structure and foundation)
- Adulthood: Pitta age (Time to be driven to fulfill our purpose in this world)
- Elder years: Vata age (Time to be reflective and contemplative, when the physical is starting to wear down)

  This natural age cycle is one that is difficult for many people to accept, especially in our society, which proposes that we must run like we are 25 until the day we die. Instead, the time-tested wisdom of Ayurveda proposes that we learn to find the purpose of each stage of life, and live fully according to that appropriate purpose.

### Time of Day

- Vata: 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. AND 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- Kapha: 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. AND 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.
- Pitta: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. AND 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.

**Season** (these qualities vary depending on where one lives)

- Spring (warm, lush, green, rainy): Kapha
- Spring (warm, dry, windy): Vata
- Summer (hot, dry): Vata, pitta
- Early autumn (hot, rainy): Pitta
- Late autumn (cool, windy): Vata
- Winter (cold, dry, windy): Vata; heavy dampness can add kapha

### Geography

- Climate varies depending on where you live, and this accounts for the different qualities associated with the seasons.
- Generally, a specific area will contribute to a certain dosha imbalance regardless of season. For example, living in a desert region brings arid dryness (and imbalances vata to some degree), regardless of the season.

# Chapter 5: The Secret to Great Health—Doshas to Maintain Balance (cont'd)

While this can all become overwhelming, the key is to keep in mind that these factors definitely affect you. If you are noticing a dosha imbalance in yourself, consider your age, the time of day, the season, and the place where you live—could these factors be adding to the imbalance? If so, determine what is in your control to adjust, and how you can use opposite qualities to balance yourself.

## Panchakarma

Of note, Ayurveda recommends a cleanse when transitioning from season to season to help rebalance any doshas that have gone awry in the preceding season. A traditional method of cleansing called panchakarma is performed under the care of a practitioner; it employs various methods based on individual needs and specific dosha imbalance. The key principles involved in panchakarma include slowing one's consumption (of food, experiences, etc), using oil massage and steam to prepare the body for cleansing, and then introducing one or more major methods of cleansing along with supplementation to wash away unnecessary buildup.

## 6. Find Harmony within Yourself

Finally, you must use each day to find harmony within yourself. As has already been mentioned, health incorporates an integral union of body, mind, and spirit. Finding your purpose or calling is never insignificant. This may come in the form of everyday tasks—taking care of the family, earning a living, supporting a friend, cleaning a floor, making laws, or giving back to the community—all of these play a role in the dance of the universe. Using your body, mind, and spirit in accord with your unique purpose is the most fundamental way of keeping you happy and healthy.

## Ayurveda and Ayurveda Yoga: From the Ancient to the Modern

Ayurveda Yoga is proud to bring you this introduction to the transformational concepts of Ayurveda. Passed down through the generations from masters to students both orally and in ancient scriptures, Ayurveda has thrived over time. Ayurveda is based on a deep knowing that we are complex beings with many levels—from gross body, to subtle mind, to essential spirit—and that both ill health and the healing process effects all of these levels. Achieving balance and well-being at all of these levels is the sign of true health. Ayurveda examines life as it can and should exist in accord with nature, and teaches us to live in harmony with our inner and outer realities—from the individual to familial, social and universal health. The tools and treatments of Ayurveda serve to awaken your own healing capacity.

There is no single, standard treatment or protocol in Ayurveda. Instead, Ayurveda's favorite answer to the question of treatment is, "it depends". Ayurvedic practices employed by an individual for healing depends on the individual's natural constitution, the season, age, climate, and so on. As such, two individuals may treat the same imbalance differently. Recognizing that every individual as a unique blueprint for health, Ayurveda allows for unique paths to healing.

Bringing this philosophy to bear on modern times, Ayurveda recognizes the stressors and demands of current times, and concurrently holds to truths that are applicable in every age and time. Ayurveda Yoga, inspired by a deep passion for the living wealth offered by Ayurveda, also recognizes the state of current times, and is honored to bring you this e-book, hopefully giving you a new perspective on your health and well-being.

Ayurveda Yoga is your source for premium quality Ayurvedic products made from certified organic herbs that are sustainably sourced and fairly traded. We take pride in bringing you only the best to support your journey to wellness.

**Please note that this E-book is for general educational purposes, and is not meant to diagnose or treat any diseases. Please see your physician for accurate diagnosis and to develop and appropriate treatment plan. No advice in this book should replace your current treatment or the advice of your physician, and no treatment should be undertaken without first consulting your physician.

# Glossary

1. **Agni:** The digestive fire
2. **Ama:** Toxic build-up of waste and harmful residue
3. **Ayurveda:** The 5000 year old traditional healing system of India, which translates to mean the "wisdom or knowledge of life"
4. **Dosha(s):** The three principles (vata, pitta, and kapha) which are used to describe a person's balanced constitution as well as current imbalances.
5. **Ghee:** Clarified butter, made by slowly cooking butter to remove the water and milk solids
6. **Kapha:** One of the 3 doshas, or constitutional principles, used to describe one's state of balance and imbalance. Kapha is made of earth and water, displays the qualities of these elements, and is responsible for stability and structure in the body.
7. **Panchakarma:** Traditional cleansing process used in Ayurveda
8. **Pitta:** One of the 3 doshas, or constitutional principles, used to describe one's state of balance and imbalance. Pitta is made of fire and water, displays the qualities of these elements, and is responsible for transformation in the body.
9. **Prakriti:** One's inherent balanced constitution
10. **Sneha:** The quality of being oily, which helps alleviate dryness. Also means love.
11. **Vata:** One of the 3 doshas, or constitutional principles, used to describe one's state of balance and imbalance. Vata is made of air and space, displays the qualities of these elements, and is responsible for movement in the body.
12. **Vikriti:** One's current imbalanced state